

IN THE CLAIMS

In this Response, Claims 1, 2, 5, 6 and 8 have been amended. Claim 3 has been canceled without prejudice.

1. (currently amended) An applicator for applying a coating substance to a stent, comprising:

a body portion;

an internal or external atomizing nozzle assembly, including an orifice, extending from the body portion to atomize a spray solution of a polymer, a solvent and a drug; and

C1 a temperature controller coupled to the nozzle assembly, the temperature controller being coupled to the nozzle assembly in close proximity to the orifice ~~so as and configured~~ to change the temperature of ~~a coating substance~~ the spray solution as it passes through the orifice so as to reduce the surface tension or the viscosity of the spray solution sprayed on a stent, wherein the temperature controller is sized ~~so as to~~ change the temperature of the ~~coating substance~~ spray solution at a concentrated area of the nozzle assembly so as to prevent exposure of the ~~coating substance~~ spray solution to the change in temperature along the entire length of the body portion to prevent degradation of the drug.

2. (currently amended) The applicator of Claim 1, wherein the temperature controller circumscribes a portion of the nozzle assembly.

Claims 3 and 4 (canceled).

5. (currently amended) An apparatus for applying a composition to a stent during a coating process, comprising:

(a) an applicator ~~for~~ capable of spraying atomized droplets of a composition containing a drug at the stent; and

(b) a temperature controller connected to the applicator and configured to adjust the temperature of the composition to a temperature other than ambient temperature to reduce the surface tension or the viscosity of the composition sprayed on the stent, and configured to adjust the temperature of the composition in a concentrated area during the applicationcoating process to prevent prolonged thermal exposure of the composition to prevent degradation of the drug.

6. (currently amended) The apparatus of Claim 5, wherein the applicator comprises a body extending into a nozzle, ~~such that~~ the temperature controller ~~is~~being positioned in close proximity to an orifice of the nozzle through which the ~~coating substance~~composition is sprayed, and wherein the temperature controller does not extend along the entire length of the body of the applicator to prevent prolonged thermal exposure of the composition to the temperature controller.

C 7. (original) The apparatus of Claim 5, wherein the applicator is an air-assisted internal or external mixing atomizer.

8. (currently amended) The apparatus of Claim 5, additionally including a temperature modulator in communication with the temperature controller for maintaining the temperature of the composition at a constant level during the ~~application~~coating process.

Claims 9-16 (canceled).

17. (previously presented) The applicator of Claim 1, wherein the temperature controller is a heat source.

18. (previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 5, wherein the temperature controller is a heat source.

19. (previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 6, wherein the temperature controller circumscribes a portion of the periphery of the orifice.